

March 29, 2022

Senator John Fonfara, Co-Chair
Representative Sean Scanlon, Co-Chair
Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee
Connecticut State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Subject: Support for SB 12 ***AN ACT AUTHORIZING AND ADJUSTING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT MATCHING FUNDS AND EXTENDING THE TIME PERIOD FOR DISTRIBUTING GRANTS FOR CERTAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT EQUIPMENT.***

Dear Co-Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and members of the Committee:

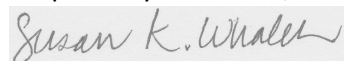
I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of SB12, with a particular emphasis on Section 11 of the bill, which would increase the authorization for funds to improve state park and recreation facilities from \$15 million to \$30 million.

As the Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Conservation at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) from 2008 to 2019, I can fully attest to the urgent need for additional investment in the state's system of forests, parks, historic structures, and trails. Connecticut is fortunate to boast one of the largest and oldest state park systems in the country. There are approximately 1,000 buildings at 110 State Parks that welcome some ten million visitors annually, and yet investment in these important assets has unfortunately not kept pace with the years. Overall, DEEP has identified a backlog of nearly \$130 million in critical maintenance, repairs, and other infrastructure improvement projects at State Parks. Just as a homeowner must continue to invest in a house to maintain its safety and value, the State Park system must continually make significant improvements to ensure park facilities are safe, well maintained, and accessible to everyone.

During the past two years an increasing number of Connecticut residents have found respite, exercise, and enjoyment in the outdoors. State Parks are one of the few state programs available to every single individual, regardless of income, education or location. Maintaining critical infrastructure such as bathhouses, roads, bridges, and historic assets will ensure state parks remain open and accessible to all.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support Section 11 of SB 12.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan K. Whalen". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Susan K. Whalen
Friends of Connecticut State Parks Board Member